

AN  
*Not in T.P.*  
**Apology**  
FOR  
**THE CONVERSION**  
OF  
**Stephen Cleveland Blythe,**  
TO THE FAITH  
OF THE  
CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC AND ROMAN  
CHURCH.

RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED TO  
PROTESTANTS  
OF EVERY DENOMINATION.

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ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM.

EPHESIANS IV. 5.

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## AN APOLOGY, &c.

**MY** conversion to the Catholic Faith, having been a subject of remark and speculation, I owe it to truth, as well as to my reputation, to impart the motives which prompted this change.

I have among Protestants, the whole circle of my relatives, whose good opinion I highly appreciate. I wish them to recognize in the following recital, every trait of artless sincerity, diligent research and cautious deliberation, which can justify me to myself and to the impartial world. Happy should I be, if in the conviction that I have chosen the "better part," they would add the ties of religious union to those of private friendship.

I was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on the 20th of January, 1771—and was baptized by the Reverend Mr. Mc Gilchrist, the Rector of St. Peter's Church. My family on both sides were Episcopalians, and my maternal grandfather, the Reverend Aaron Cleveland, had been Rector of Halifax in Nova Scotia.

The war of the Revolution coming on, the Clergy of this persuasion being generally attached to the Royal cause, emigrated; and the Churches were shut up. During this interval, our family attended Congregational worship in the Meeting house of the Reverend Mr. (now Doctor) Barnard.

As soon as I had learned to read, the Catechism of the Westminster Divines was put into my hands. This was a compendium of the Calvinistic doctrines then generally adhered to in

New-England—and this I repeated to my minister periodically in the Meeting house, with other children of the neighborhood. The Peace of 1783 reopened the episcopal churches—and we had for our new Rector the Reverend Mr. Fisher. His Sermons were judicious and adapted to the general taste.

Hitherto I had experienced no serious impressions of religion. At the age of eleven years, (1782) I was sent to Philips Academy at Andover, when I met with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. This was calculated to inflame a youthful imagination—and it had its effect upon mine.—Hervey's *Meditations* also fell in my way—and they charmed me by the glitter of their stile, and their useful moral.

There was about this time, what is called in Methodisical language, a revival of Religion in Salem. I attended some of the meetings, during a vacation ; but felt no corresponding emotions.

I soon afterward, met with Young's *Night Thoughts* ; to the reading of which I was introduced by the example of my Grandmother, an old lady of excellent sense and piety—and with whom the Poet of the tombs was a favorite and daily companion. The perusal of this admirable work impressed me deeply. It presented me with new and more exalted views of the government of God ; and the final destination of Man. It diffused a soft and tender melancholy over my mind and I aspired to immortality.

These sublime impressions however were not lasting. I was sent (1786) to Harvard College, where a general laxity of morals prevailed. After a year's residence, my father removed me from the university and I returned to Salem to study Physic.

New trials awaited me. Having finished my medical studies, I embarked (1790) for Charleston in South-Carolina. This is one of the most dissipated cities in the world. A warm climate invites to luxury and enjoyment ; and affluence furnishes the means. Although not yet twenty years old, I was aware of the perils which surrounded me—and determined to be upon my guard. I kept much at home, and when unoccupied by the calls of my profession, devoted my time to reading—and occasionally amused myself with poetical composition, for which I had much taste and was flattered to have some talent.

I re-opened Young, and he fortified my love of abstraction and retirement. My companions were few—and from my industrious seclusion from the gay world, I hoped to escape the snares, which had caught so many unwary youth. I was mistaken. I gradually enlarged my sphere of society and as gradually estranged myself from those solid maxims of piety and prudence, which I had brought from New-England. I soon lost all relish for serious reading and prayer—and in a short time neglected public worship.

I removed from Charleston to Savannah in Georgia—whence in 1794 I embarked for the West Indies. In this part of the world, I found nothing calculated to renew the pious impressions of my youth—but much to make me forget them altogether.

Hitherto, though far from living up to the standard of the Gospel, I had never been taught to doubt the truth of divine Revelation. It was now my misfortune to add *Infidelity* to my other follies, and to have the whole fabric of my religious belief overturned by a single blow. This was achieved by Paine's *Age of Reason*. I read

this book with extraordinary attention, and thought his arguments incontrovertible. In short, I was a convert to Deism.

From the West Indies, I went (1795) to France. I met Mr. Paine in Paris and was fortified in my new principles.

I was however still in some degree under the influence of virtuous habit, which had been early fashioned by religious belief—although this belief was now effaced from my mind. I was anxious to sustain a good name, by being in my narrow sphere a doer of good. These sentiments resembled that precious “leaven hid in three measures of meal.”—Matt, xiii. 33.

I left France in 1797 and went to England. Having accepted of an assistancy in an Academy at Kennington, a village near London, I attended divine service regularly with the pupils at Lambeth Church. Prayers were also read morning and evening in our school room. In these exercises I assisted and occasionally preached a Sermon. All this, however, I considered as a mere matter of routine, which did nothing to awaken me from the torpor of infidelity.

In the year 1798 being at Manchester, I was drawn by curiosity to visit Fairfield, a village of the Moravian Brethren. I was struck with the elegant simplicity of their worship—and felt a revival of pious emotions in my heart. This prompted me to enter into correspondence with the Reverend John Swertner, one of their ministers, in order to learn the peculiar doctrines and discipline of this sect, and with a view to admittance into their society. He obliged me with a candid exposition of their sentiments—but I did not find them to my taste, and I pursued the design no farther.

The Moravians address their prayers exclusively to Jesus Christ. This appeared to me a sort of disrespect to the Father and even a virtual denial of his existence. I conceived it, moreover, contrary to the express precept and example of our Saviour himself, who commanded us, when we pray to say "Our Father, &c."—Their notions of faith also seemed to my apprehension wild and incoherent. They do not indeed reject good works; but their practice is certainly more favorable to them than their doctrine. Many points of the Moravian discipline too had in my mind an air of extravagance. Their marriages I thought ill-assorted—and the decision of every question by the *lot*, in a Protestant Church which declares that miracles have ceased, seemed to the last degree inconsistent.

Having returned to London, I got acquainted with some members of the society of Universalists, founded by my countryman, the Reverend Elhanan Winchester—and addressed myself to their minister, the Reverend Mr. Vidler, for a sketch of their doctrines. My Father (blessed be his memory!) had indulged this belief—and entertained that peculiarity of it professed by the Reverend John Murray of Boston. But I soon doubted that this ground was untenable by any who adhered to the plain text of scripture—was solely supported by some detached passages, obscure and equivocal. I dropped the Universalists.

There had now been for several years in London a society under the name of the New Jerusalem. I heard such astonishing accounts of their doctrines, that my curiosity was strongly excited to learn them in detail. For this purpose I addressed myself to the Reverend Joseph Proud,



their High Priest, who lent me several tracts written by their founder Baron Swedenborg. I was struck with the intrepidity of his undertaking. Conjecture and hypothesis are out of the question. All is pronounced to be fact. On the bold assumption of immediate inspiration from heaven, this hardy Dogmatist had erected a system of doctrines unequalled for ingenuity of contrivance. I went through much of this voluminous writer—and was for a while charmed with the subtlety of his arguments: but finding the whole scheme rest solely on the personal responsibility of one who wrought no miracle in support of his pretensions, I took leave of him as an entertaining madman and classed his tales with those of the Arabian Nights.

My next tour was among the Quakers. Their modesty and simplicity had impressed me when a boy, and I loved the men without knowing their doctrines. To learn them satisfactorily, I addressed myself to some of the most intelligent of the society, and attended their meetings. If I was at first delighted with their plain and artless deportment, I was soon dissatisfied with the nudity of their worship. I examined with the eye of reason and with the scripture before me, their principal doctrine of a *Divine Light within*, which was to lead us into all truth. This was avowedly not the light of Conscience, and I knew no other. I had no doubt indeed that Conscience was susceptible of, and received at times, illumination from on high: but still it appeared to me incontrovertible that, clear or obscure, darkened by the powers of mischief, or enlightened from heaven itself, Conscience was our sole interior guide. Their definition of this favorite tenet, seemed to me a distinction without a difference, and much



too subtle for edification. I gradually withdrew from their correspondence.

Still anxious and not disheartened in my pursuit, I began to attend the worship of a society of Unitarians, then under the pastoral care of the Reverend Dr. Disney. Their Liturgy was modelled after that of the Church of England—and their doctrine appeared to me the simplest and most rational I had yet met with. The recognition of one supreme God, the Father of all—and of whom all other beings, however elevated by nature or by merit, are but the creatures, had in my estimation an air of grandeur, which engaged all my attention. But as if I were doomed to be the victim of my own fastidious delicacy, and endlessly to roam in quest of what I should never find, I soon discovered in the simplest form of Christianity, the most palpable inconsistencies. The Socinians had waged war with all other sects, under the pretext that reason is our sole guide—and the only touchstone by which all doctrine, divine or human, is to be tried—and that whatever cannot abide this test is to be rejected as false. In obedience to this rule, they deny the virginity of Mary, and the incarnation and divinity of Jesus Christ. But in *disobedience* to this rule, they admit all the miracles of the Old and New Testaments. I left them unsatisfied.

In justice to myself and to the honest zeal with which I engaged in these tiresome expeditions in quest of truth, I must observe that I never entered into communion with any of these societies. I postponed my adhesion to the moment of ultimate conviction—a moment which had not yet arrived.

About this time I fell sick of a nervous fever, and having relapsed twice, my disorder cost me

several months of suffering and confinement. During my illness I met with Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. This work is of a high Calvinistical cast—and is written with much pathos. I trembled at his picture of the impenitent sinner—and resolved that if by divine mercy I should be restored to health, I would solemnly dedicate myself to God.

My ardor now began to abate, I saw on every side clusters of sects which claimed divine truth as exclusively their own, while the Bible served them all as a vast armoury, from which they supplied themselves with weapons, and waged an interminable war against each other. In short, I met with nothing to my mind—and began to despair of finding what I sought in any christian communion.

It is to be observed that into my calculations, the Roman Catholic faith had never yet entered. I had heard the Reverend John Thayer of Boston preach once or twice in Salem when I was young; but I heard him with indifference. I had occasionally too while in London frequented the Sardinian Ambassador's Chapel in Lincoln's Inn fields—but I was attracted by the music and not by the doctrine. I had imbibed in early life most of the Protestant prejudices against Catholics—and never conceived that there was any truth in their church, but what they enjoyed in common with all other churches. In other respects I viewed it as a sink of idolatry and corruption.

I now thought of taking leave of Christianity altogether and embracing Mahometanism, I was already acquainted with the outlines of this doctrine—and with a view to farther instruction, I wrote to the Turkish Ambassador. His answer was so unmeaning, that I was ashamed of my

project and abandoned it. The Guardian of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps, preserved me from this foolish temptation.

Having at length wandered till I was fairly bewildered among the *ignes fatui* of contending sects, I resolved to look no farther—but retire once more to the strong holds of Deism—and resting satisfied with the existence and perfections of the Supreme Being and of my moral obligations, together with what hope of a future state might be derived from analogy; desist from any farther pursuit.

Books of devotion however still continued to occupy my leisure hours. Having met with Law's *Serious Call to a devout and holy life*, I read it with great care and delight. I followed his method of prayer (six times a day) for a considerable time—and tho' I afterward discontinued this practice, his book still shares many of my reading hours.

I had received (1799) an appointment upon the Hospital Staff of the Army, and was ordered (1801) to the West Indies. During the passage, I lost a little Boy, my first born. I lamented his death with the tenderest sorrow, and creation wore a gloom around me. Besides, it was my misery to mourn like those without hope. The belief of a future life was to me problematical—and upon this melancholy occasion, I felt the absence of its benign influence to cheer my despondency. I determined once more to re-consider the doctrines of Revelation—and even to anticipate my final conviction—by “performing without faith, the works of faith.”—I accordingly gave myself up to religious reading and prayer—earnestly invoking the God of light and truth to direct my way—and guide me to that

haven of tranquility of which my mind had been in long and anxious search.

Some of the works of Doctor Priestley having fallen into my hands—I examined his evidences of the truth of revealed religion with great attention. They threw much light upon the subject and dissipated many of my doubts.

After the restoration of Martinico to the French at the peace of 1802, I was ordered on medical duty to St. Christopher's. There was a flourishing mission of the Moravian Brethren in this Island. On the strength of my former acquaintance with some of their society in England, I cultivated the friendship of the ministers who conducted this mission. I lived next door to their chapel and enjoyed much of their society. This circumstance contributed to keep my religious principles alive.

During my long sickness in London, I had contemplated as already related, dedicating myself to God by a formal act. Several obstacles had hitherto conspired to retard the execution of this design—but I now resolved to delay it no longer. I accordingly drew up a form, and having with much care brought it to the perfection I wished, I borrowed the use of the Moravian Chapel for the occasion, and on the 1st of January 1803, I entered it with a lighted candle before day—and having read my solemn Covenant, I signed and sealed it.

I had not been long in this Island before I projected and contributed to found a Charitable Institution for the relief of poor and destitute children. The history of this establishment has been given to the public. The committee of superintendence were solicitous that I should take the charge of it—and having persuaded me to resign

my appointment upon the Hospital Staff of the army, I yielded to their inclinations. I governed this institution for two years—and was I believe, under Providence the humble means of rescuing many a poor child from vice and misery—and bestowing on him the benefits of a virtuous education.

While on the exercise of this charge I met with Massillon's Sermons, which I read with uncommon interest. I found in this inimitable preacher an unction—which I had never yet met with elsewhere. From the moral of this excellent writer a transition was natural to the faith which he professed—and to the church of which he was so illustrious an ornament. I inferred either that the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church was not of the corrupt character imputed to it, or that Massillon had given it a false lustre.

My mind however yet remaining in equipoise, I still continued the forms of the Church of England, the established religion of the Island—but with a firm resolution to continue my Catholic enquiries, whenever Providence should afford me the opportunity.

I had already paid my quota of the general tax to the insalubrity of the climate of the West Indies, in the shape of several alarming fits of sickness. In 1805 I was in such a state of debility that I was obliged to relinquish my charge of the Institution and seek my lost health in my native climate. I arrived at Boston in May.

I had now happily the means of bringing the question which had long agitated my mind to a decision. There was in this town a Catholic Church and Catholic Clergymen to hear and answer my enquiries. I immediately addressed myself to the Reverend Mr. Cheverus, the assistant Minister—

and now Bishop of Boston. He received me with great kindness and introduced me to his Colleague the Reverend Doctor Matignon. I found in Mr. Cheverus a man of uncommon zeal and uncommon talents. He possessed the language of the country in perfection—and thundered in it from the pulpit with the eloquence of a Paul. In Dr. Matignon I discovered a man of equal zeal and extraordinary piety, mingled with the most captivating suavity of manners. They lived in habits of friendship with the principal inhabitants of Boston—and the various Protestant ministers of the neighbourhood were delighted to assist at the consecration of their new and beautiful church.

Mr. Cheverus put into my hands a little book, of which I had been long in quest—Bossuet's *Exposition of the Catholic Faith*. This celebrated tract the famous historian Gibbon asserts to have achieved his own conversion, and he adds by way of consolation, that he “surely fell by a noble hand.” I read this work with attention, and found it luminous and candid throughout. To this succeeded many other pieces of a similar description.

I removed to Salem—and continued my correspondence with Mr. Cheverus at intervals for four years. I had read and reflected enough to abandon all hope of finding satisfaction in any Protestant communion: but still my scruples with regard to the Catholic Faith were not resolved. I had determined to take nothing upon trust—and during our controversy every article of the Catholic doctrine passed the ordeal of a critical examination. I had not much difficulty with regard to the *Sacrifice of the Mass*—and the *real presence* of Christ in the Sacrament—although I did not much relish the term *Transubstantiation*.

I had more with regard to the existence of *Purgatory*, which appeared to be of Pagan origin. The worship also of *Mary and the Saints*—the veneration of *Relics and Images*—struck me as both irrational and unscriptural.

It is worthy of remark that one of the greatest difficulties which I had to overcome was not of Protestant growth. This was the doctrine of the *Trinity*. I saw no tenet in any system of religion apparently more repugnant to reason and scripture than this. I had applied to the best commentators for relief—but they all had left the subject in my mind darkened with new obscurities. This will ever be the case, when men undertake to measure Divinity by a scale of humanity—and to sound depths unfathomable by the human understanding.

I need not recapitulate the arguments which circulated between me and my learned correspondent, in this most momentous of all discussions, because the substance of them will be incorporated with the following pages. Suffice it to observe, that after an obstinate contest I began to give way—and in a short time afterward announced my surrender—and proposed to enter directly into fellowship with the Catholic Church. This was however a more serious measure than I had imagined. My correspondent desired I would take more time—and urged the necessity of some important preparatory steps. During this delay, new scruples tormented me, which I frankly communicated to Mr. Cheverus, who answered them in the most affectionate terms, which marked neither chagrin nor disappointment.

The controversy however was soon to close. I had exhausted every source of argument in my power against the doctrines of the Catholic



Church—and I now saw that I could not with any consistency reject them, if I professed myself a *Christian*. There still remained to me however one resource—that of *Deism*—and a steady denial of the existence of supernatural Revelation. But again to remove from the pale of every visible Church was a melancholy alternative, and I wished to avoid it. At every step in this interesting enquiry more and more light was shed upon my path,—and I at length perceived that to resist any longer were wilful and unpardonable obstinacy. I accordingly apprized my correspondent of my final conversion to the Catholic Faith and having removed to Charlestown with the view of being near my correspondents and a Catholic place of worship, I made my first communion in the Church of the Holy Cross in Boston, at the feast of Pentecost 1809—in which solemn ceremony I was joined by my family.

I was not yet satisfied.—Although in Catholic communion and in the vicinity of a Catholic Church, wishing still more to fortify the influence of a faith, to which I was so zealously attached; I took the resolution of abandoning my country with all my dear connections and removing to Canada. Soon after my arrival I established myself in the practice of Physic at Boucherville, a pleasant village on the banks of the St. Lawrence—nine miles below Montreal. I was confirmed by the Bishop of Québec, August 10, 1810, and took the name of St. Francis of Sales—to which I may add that in obedience to his injunction to enter into the confraternity of the place where we live, I joined the congregation of the Blessed Virgin as an Approbaniste—and was admitted to full fellowship at their last festival, August 25, 1811.

Since my conversion to the Catholic Faith, I have learned that the consolations which flow from the steady pursuit of truth can soften the heaviest adversities. I had abandoned my country—and sacrificed all the endearments of private friendship. To these misfortunes it pleased the Almighty to add a calamity, equally lamentable and unforeseen. Within two months after my arrival in this Province, a melancholy disorder assailed the very seat of life—and menaced me with extinction in the prime of my days. Under this dreadful visitation, however, I still live—and still wait its issue with, I trust, a humble and entire resignation to the holy will of God.

If the Gospel of Jesus Christ be true, he came into the world upon an errand of love—and to establish a Church which will secure salvation to all mankind who shall be found in its bosom.

In casting our eyes over Christendom, we see a vast variety of sects who claim to be this Church—and appropriate to themselves its character and its promises.

Amid this incongruous assemblage rises the Roman Catholic Church. She is like a tower on a hill and proclaims her greatness to the remotest horizon. *Her claims* therefore merit the first notice.

It might be supposed *a priori* if a Divine Person were deputed from heaven to found a Church on earth, that this Church would be impressed with certain marks or features to distinguish it from pretenders, as prominent and palpable as the king's head upon the national coin.

What are these distinguishing characters? I answer—we might expect—1. That this Church should be the most ancient of any existing, and of uninterrupted succession in its pastors.—

2. That it should be the most universal. 3. That its doctrine should be in perfect consent with the Holy Scriptures—uniform and invariable—4. That it should have the gift of miracles.

Let us try the pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church by these data.

1. Antiquity and uninterrupted succession. That the Roman Catholic Church is the most ancient of all churches, cannot be questioned by any who have confidence in history. The succession of the Bishops of Rome may be traced without the smallest interruption, step by step from the present Pope to St. Peter. We can go no farther—for it was this zealous Apostle that our Lord commissioned to be chief of his infant church, in the ever memorable words—recorded by St. Mathew---xvi. 18. Thus this church, in one sense, as Bossuet judiciously remarks, as old as the world, is strictly and historically as old as Christianity. Many and oft have been her struggles with the powers of darkness in the shape of schisms and heresies, which have disturbed her tranquility; but she has risen from the combat with victory in her hand. Of these, every age has furnished her proportion. Latterly, the secession of half Europe from her communion, menaced her downfall---which the French Revolution was supposed to leave no longer doubtful. What hosts of Sermons were preached and published announcing a speedy extinction of "the man of sin"! Finally, when the French took Rome and imprisoned the Vicar of Jesus Christ, epitaphs were written for departed Popery. But Depression was not Ruin. God has tried the church with adversity---and is now raising her to new splendor. We have seen Greek and Protestant unite to re-instate the fallen Pontiff in his

sovereignty---and to decorate with another wreath of glory the chair of St. Peter.

2. **Universality.** This article needs no particular proof---as it has never been contested. From this feature the church assumes the title of *Catholic* which is tacitly acknowledged as legitimate by separatists of every denomination. Her doctors and apostles have carried the cross of Christ to every part of the habitable globe---and have proclaimed the glad tidings of the Gospel from the Equator to the Poles---among the snows of Siberia and the burning sands of Abyssinia.

3. **Scripturality---Uniformity and Invariability of Doctrine.** The doctrines now taught by the Catholic Church are co-eval with christianity itself. As a proof of this, allusion is made to them in the writings of the earliest Fathers of the Church---for whom our Protestant brethren profess to feel (and I believe truly) the highest veneration; nor has any investigation been able to fix a later date to a single article of Catholic faith than the æra of Christ himself. Infinite are the attempts which have been made, in nightly researches among the forgotten and musty records of the middle ages, to contradict this claim of the Catholic Church---but in vain. Much of the clamor which has been excited against the church on this article, has arisen from an egregious mistake. *Articles of faith* have been confounded with *points of discipline*. Over the latter, the church has the most absolute control; over the former---none at all. Her discipline has varied in different ages---but her doctrine is immutable.

4. **The Gift of Miracles.** This test of the true church is one of the most decisive. Here the Catholic Church shines with transcendent lustre.

Not a sect that has had the misfortune to separate from her communion, has ever pretended to the slightest miraculous gift. Now it follows irresistably that if the Catholic Church has ever been the instrument of a single Miracle, the triumph is all her own.

To controvert this stubborn pretension of the Catholic Church, her adversaries boldly aver that Miracles, once necessary to the establishment of christianity, are since its establishment, no longer necessary--and have therefore ceased. In what book or record--or by what sentence and authority Miracles are declared to have ceased, Catholics have yet to learn. If it be found in scripture, let the texts be cited.

This appeal, however, to scripture in a question of Miracles, is superfluous and idle to the last degree. A Miracle, so far from needing any extrinsic evidence to support it, is intended by its very nature to give evidence and support to other truths. The scripture itself is founded upon Miracles--and had not the Miracles been performed, the doctrines which they were destined to sanction, had never been proclaimed nor believed.

No hypothesis, however ingenious, can be rationally opposed to a matter of fact. Has the Catholic Church ever performed a Miracle? Let sober history answer--which is full of the best authenticated documents--and the most exact details of miraculous power exercised in this church, that the most sceptical enquirer can desire. To cite merely a catalogue of preservations and cures--together with other interpositions of divine power, wrought through the instrumentality of living and departed Saints of this church, would fill volumes.

From this immense mass of miraculous matter it is difficult to select any particular examples for citation, when the whole seems so equally adapted to the purpose. It is sufficient on this occasion to observe that the miracles of St. Augustine, the Apostle of England—and those of St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies, have been acknowledged by the most judicious Protestant Writers.

These are the chief grounds on which the Catholic Church urges her claim to that *true church* predicted by the Prophets of Israel—and in due time founded by our Lord and Saviour—and against which “the gates of hell” were never to “prevail.”

The regular prosecution of my plan now leads me to notice and if I can, to refute some of the acrimonious charges, which have been long directed against the doctrines maintained by the Catholic Church.

I begin by observing that on this occasion the anxious and sincere enquirer after truth cannot too soon dismiss all his prejudices, founded on names and epithets. The terms Rome, Pope, Mass, Crucifix, Inquisition, &c. have, from early impressions, done more to render our Protestant brethren callous to Catholic evidence, than all the arguments of the Reformers united.

One of the gravest charges against the Catholic Church is that of *Idolatry*. Catholics are accused of being the blindest Idolaters—not only in rendering the creature the homage due only to the Creator—but in being worshippers of sticks and stones. This is certainly the heaviest of all possible accusations against a religious society—and if substantiated, would prove that the Catholic church, so far from being the true church

of Christ, is *no Christian Church at all*. For it is this feature which forms the principal line of demarcation between christianity and Heathenism. The most essential difference between Christians and Pagans is not, nor ever was, that the former have a sense of religious obligation and feel the necessity of religious worship—and the latter, not : but it is this—that while Christians worship the true God—Pagans worship a host of false divinities and transfer their supposed attributes to their images. This and this only is Idolatry—and of this shocking perversion of religious belief and practice, Catholics are wantonly accused by almost all who have separated from her communion. It will require neither much address nor many words to clear them of this reproach.

It is objected that there is Idolatry in the Mass, and that Catholics worship the elements of bread and wine as the real body and blood of Christ.

I answer, the elements of bread and wine are not worshipped—and when worship is rendered, these elements have undergone the most important revolution that almighty and miraculous power can effect. This wonderful change, the sole perquisite and characteristic of the true church and ministry, is produced by the words of Consecration pronounced by the Priest, and this we call *Transubstantiation*—which has ever been the subject of gross misconception and indecent censure.

The sacrifice of the Mass is as ancient as Christianity itself. It was prefigured in the earliest ages of the world. Genesis xiv. 18. Its immediate establishment is by our Saviour himself—Luke xxii. 19. 20. This holy sacrament is also attended by St. Paul in 1 Cor. x. 16.



The texts are clear and decisive—and leave no room for cavil or objection in any who believe the Scriptures.

If we be asked, why we interpret these texts in the literal sense, we can only reply in the words of the great Bossuet. "There is no more reason to ask us why we fix ourselves to the literal sense, than there is to ask a traveller why he follows the high road. It is their part, who have recourse to the figurative sense, and who take bye paths, to give a reason for what they do. So true it is, that the *literal* sense of the Bible is never to be abandoned for the *figurative* except in passages when the absurdity or contradiction follows the literal interpretation.

To alledge that this astonishing change is *impossible*, is to limit this power of God. The change is indeed miraculous—but ought not a moment to suspend the belief of those whose religion is founded on miracles.

We are reproached with this belief in the opinion that it is exclusively the doctrine of the Roman Church—and that no other church, either ancient or modern, shares it with her. Now it appears from the most incontestible documents of history, that among all the Churches eastern and western—which from the earliest ages have separated from the Catholic unity, there is not one to be found, before the æra of what is called the Reformation, which doubted or called in question the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. How much soever they chose to differ in other points from the Catholic Church and from each other, they all united in this belief. The perpetual consent of the Greek and all the Oriental churches in this article has been demonstrated in so convincing a manner by M. Arnauld and Ab-

be Repaudot, as to silence the most incredulous. This is acknowledged by many Protestant Writers of the most distinguished reputation. And it is not a little remarkable, that the Church of England, unable to evade the plain declaration of Scripture on this point—declares in her public Catechism that “the body and blood of Christ” *are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.*

The Catholic Church is accused of Idolatry also in the Invocation of the Blessed Virgin, Saints and Angels, and this is pronounced rendering them divine worship.

Be it known then, that Catholics do not worship them. We do indeed address them in certain forms and with much solemnity: but it is only to beseech them to add their prayers to ours—and to intercede for us at the throne of the Most High. Catholics recognize no power in these illustrious persons to help us by their own immediate act. They are only supposed to assist us by joining their supplications to ours. If our Protestant brethren should object—and say that God has no need of their supplications, as he is ever ready to hearken to the prayers of the humblest of his creatures—and that their intercession is superfluous, as our Lord Jesus Christ is our Intercessor with the Father; we can retort the objection—and ask them why they solicit the prayers of each other—and why petitions for this purpose, and appear in the pulpits of Protestant churches? If the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Angels and Saints cannot avail us, we may be very sure that nothing can be expected from those of our poor, sinful fellow creatures.

But that their prayers can and do avail us, we have the express testimony of scripture.

In the first place, they know what passes on earth—St. Luke, xx. 10. That Angels pray for as we learn from the Prophet Zech. i. 12—and St. John confirms this truth, Rev. v. 8—viii. 3. That Catholics make their invocations on their knees is no matter for objection, than children's kneeling to ask the blessing of their parents—a practice common to all Christians and perhaps to all people.

Catholics are reproached with a species of impiety in calling the blessed Virgin the *Mother of God*. It is said that Christ is a compound being—partly human—partly divine; that Mary was the mother of his humanity—but that his divinity is uncreated—and that he shares it with the Father and the Holy Ghost in heaven.

In answer to this I observe, that our Protestant brethren in general, acknowledge Christ as God—that they pray to him by the name which he bore while on earth—and that in their addresses they use no circumlocution to prove that it is merely his Divinity which they invoke. They consider Jesus Christ as God. As far then as this is true, it is equally so that Mary, being the mother of Jesus Christ, is the mother of God. The consequence follows irresistibly.

We come now to the last article of supposed Catholic Idolatry, the worship of Images and Relics.

“Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven Image” says the divine commandment—and is often quoted to cover Catholics with confusion.

Now, that the strict Protestant sense is not the sense of the law of Moses, must be evident to the most common apprehension—unless we ac-

knowledge that the Scripture is inconsistent with itself. For Images were not only permitted in the Jewish worship, but were absolutely commanded by God himself. Exodus. xxv. 18. &c. They were placed on each side of the Mercy Seat—in the Sanctuary—Exod. xxxvii. 7. And in the temple of Solomon, i. Chron. xxviii. 18. 19—2 Chron. iii. 10. 2 Kings vi. 23, 32, 35.

The Catholic Church has recommended to the faithful the use of Images—(as appears from the records of the earliest councils) to animate and enliven the pious affections. In every Catholic family are seen the Crucifix—and pictures of departed Saints. We kneel in prayer before the Image of our crucified Saviour—that our minds, impressed with the awful circumstances of his passion and death, may be excited to follow the precepts and example of the great Captain of our Salvation—and learn that “we have redemption through his blood.”

Hence may be inferred the utility of Images—and the honor and respect which are paid them by all the members of the church.

It is here incumbent on me to observe once for all, that on this, as well as on every other point in the controversy, I quote only the *real doctrine* of the church. It is to be regretted that in *practice*, many have departed from her precepts: and as some have fallen short of her injunctions, others have carried them to excess. Among other indiscretions, the use of Images may have been sometimes perverted to purposes of improper devotion. But the best things are liable to abuse. Of this truth, the Scripture itself is a melancholy example.

The reasons on which the Catholic Church enjoins the veneration of Relics, are the following:

1. They have been the victims and living temples of God. 2. They are pre-ordained to a happy resurrection. 3. They have been and are daily the Instruments of the power of God, for the working of innumerable miracles. 4. They serve to encourage the faithful to an imitation of their virtues.

If these reasons be thought not sufficiently strong to sanction this salutary practice—Catholics can likewise urge the authority of Scripture. ii. Kings xiii, 21. Matth. ix. 21. Acts xix. 11, 12.

“ Nothing is more evident (says Bishop Challoner) from all kind of monuments of Antiquity, than that the veneration of the Relics of the Saints, is one of the most ancient things in Christianity---as may be seen in the writings of the Holy Fathers, particularly St. Basil, St. Gregory Nyssen, St. Gregory Narianszen, St. Cyril, St. John Chrisostom, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Austin and Theodout---to pass over many others, who all agree in approving this practice---all and or most of them bear record, that God has also approved it by innumerable miracles.”

Another censure is levelled at the power which the Catholic Church recognizes in her Priests to forgive sins.

It has been already stated, and the proofs of it are sufficient to satisfy the most incredulous, that our Lord Jesus Christ founded his church in the person of St. Peter, who was accordingly the first Bishop of Rome, or rather of the Catholic Church throughout the world---and whose dignity and authority have been transmitted in regular succession to the respectable person who now wears the tiara. Matthew xvi. 18, 19, xviii. 18. St. John xx. 21, 22, 23.

The power of absolution in the Priest involves the duty of Penance in the Layman---and which has been equally misrepresented.

" Penance (continues Dr. Challoner) is a Sacrament, by which the faithful that have fallen into sins, confessing the same with a true repentance, and a sincere purpose of making satisfaction, are absolved from their sins by the Minister of God." Three things are required on the part of the sinner in order to obtain forgiveness, viz. Contrition, Confession and Satisfaction.

This Sacrament although an Institution of Christianity, has the sanction of the Jewish Law, Numbers v. 5, 6, 7. In the New Testament, injunctions and examples are not wanting to attest the reality and utility of it. Matth. iii. 5, 6. Acts xix. 18. St. James v. 16.

Confession is one of the most admirable institutions independently of its divinity, that was ever conceived for the good of man. In every age and in every land, the church has the happiness to see thousands of sinners annually appeal to the sublime consolations of this duty and not appeal in vain. Absolution is never accorded the penitent, unless he fulfils the conditions required by the Institution. The Clergy confess as well as the Laity---and to see a Priest of the highest rank approach the tribunal of penance---and humbly kneel at the feet of his Confessor is one of the most beautiful and edifying spectacles which the Catholic Church affords.

If neither the divinity of this holy institution, the injunctions of the Church nor the verdict of the pious of all ages be satisfactory to the candid Protestant, let him listen to the deliberate opinion of a Philosopher.

“ Confession (says Voltaire in his *Dictionary*) is highly beneficial—a strong curb to vice, and a very early institution. It was anciently practised at the celebration of all the Mysteries of the Church! and we have imitated and sanctified so devout an observance: it avails greatly, turning resentment and hatred into forgiveness and friendship: by it the petty rogues are induced to restore what they have stolen,” and in his *Age of Louis 15*, he says “ Confession is the greatest of all restraints to human wickedness.”

Absolution has been pronounced “ a leave to commit sin.” This calumny would have been spared, if its inventors had duly weighed the conditions, on which pardon is accorded to the confessing sinner. Confession alone is by no means a sufficient title to forgiveness. To this must be joined Contrition and Satisfaction for the offence. So that instead of requiring *less* of the delinquent than Protestant Ministers do, the Catholic church requires *more*. Repentance is all that is exacted by the former—but the latter require satisfaction and atonement.

If confession thus reconciles a penitent sinner to his offended Maker, communion seals his pardon. “ Let a man (says the eloquent Chateaubriand) worthily approach the Holy Sacrament only once a month, and this man must necessarily become one of the most virtuous on earth.”

Indulgences are intimately connected with the sacrament of penance—and as an article of Catholic faith has been equally misunderstood.

“ By an indulgence (pursues the same enlightened Prelate) we mean no more than the releasing of true penitents the debt of temporal punishment, which remained due to their sins, after the sins themselves as to the guilt and eternal



punishment, had been already remitted by the sacrament of penance, or by perfect contrition."

If any deny that a debt of temporal punishment can remain after the guilt of it is removed, we may refer to the example of no less a person than the royal Psalmist of Israel. We learn from the book of Samuel, that although Nathan assures David that the Lord had put away his sin yet he denounced against him many temporal punishments. Nor is this important truth unsupported by apostolical authority, ii. Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Purgatory is another article of Catholic belief which has been pronounced unscriptural and absurd.

The real doctrine of the church on this subject should silence the objection.

She teaches us that the Saints of some few others who have led lives of singular piety and virtue on earth—are at their death immediately received into glory. She informs us also that there are others—and but too many, whose guilt is so great, that in quitting their mortal bodies, they go strait to hell. Finally, she declares, that there are great numbers, who not deserving of eternal punishment by their crimes—nor yet so immaculate as to go immediately to heaven, are placed by divine justice in a *middle state*, where their personal sufferings united to the prayers of the faithful on earth, may finally avail to procure them pardon and a reception into the realms of bliss. This is what the church calls Purgatory—and on this important and consolatory belief is founded the Catholic and pious custom of praying for the dead. We could cite hosts of Greek and Latin Fathers, to prove the antiquity of this salutary practice. Tertullian, who wrote but a

bout a hundred years after the death of the Apostles, speaks often of it, and it is recognized as an Apostolical tradition in the most ancient liturgies of all Christian churches before the reformation—as the Roman, Greek, Syrian, Armenian, Nestorian, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Indian, &c. &c.

As this article of faith is sanctioned by good sense and remote antiquity—so it has also the support of Scripture. Matthew v. 26. xii—36—1 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 15. To all which we may add, that prayers for the dead made part of the ritual of the Jewish Church. ii Macc. xii. 45. &c.

In this humble defence of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, I say nothing of Baptism, Confirmation, Extreme Unction, Matrimony, Holy Orders, nor of the laws relative to Fasting and Abstinence; either because our Protestant brethren in general unite with us in these points; or if differing in opinion from us, would not view them as obstacles to a reconciliation.

It is thought by many, to be great presumption in the Priests of the Catholic Church to receive the Holy Sacrament in both kinds themselves, yet to deny the Cup to the Laity.

As this regulation appears on the very face of it impossible to be ascribed to any sinister motive in the Pastors of the Church, we need not accordingly go far to learn the reason of it.

The Church has taught from the earliest ages, that the Sacrament is *entire*, whether administered in one kind or in both. And the sole reason why the Cup is withheld from the Laity, is simply lest the blood of Christ in the shape of wine should be spilled—and great profanation and confusion ensue, if it were administered to whole congregations.

One kind alone as sufficient to salvation is sufficiently justified by the doctrine and practice of the Apostles—and for those who think Priests more selfish and cunning than other men, it will I trust be sufficient to learn, that, sick and dying, the Clergy themselves never receive the Sacrament but in *one kind*. If they receive in both kinds at the Altar, they do it as officiating in the person of Christ, who offers his body and blood in the Mass, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

To all this I might add, that this practice is no article of Catholic faith—but one merely of *Discipline*—which at any time may be abrogated by the authority which made it.

The Church has been accused of a splendor and magnificence in her general economy and public worship, inconsistent with the simplicity of the original institution of our divine religion. "God (it is quoted) is a spirit—and they who worship him, should worship him in spirit and in truth. But it is not sufficiently considered, that God was not less a spirit in ancient times than he is now—and yet he not only approved, but instituted for his chosen people a form of worship, the most splendid and magnificent that the world had ever seen. That the worship of the Apostles and primitive Christians was simple, is freely granted. But this was perhaps rather their misfortune than their choice. During the first prosecutions, they had no public worship at all. Their ceremonies were performed, and the bread of life was broken to them in private, in the dark recesses of caves and grottos—or wherever they could escape the inspection and interference of the civil power.

The use of the sign of the Cross among Catholics, is censured as superstitious ; but abundant documents prove it to be as ancient as Christianity. " At every step (says Tertullian) at every coming in and going out, when we put our cloaths or shoes, when we wash, when we sit down to table, when we light a candle, when we go to bed—whatsoever conversation employs us, we imprint on our foreheads the sign of the cross."

I come now to a cruel slander against the Catholic Church, which is perhaps more generally diffused than any other. She is accused of wanting charity—and is taxed with denouncing eternal destruction against all those who are not of her communion.

It is true indeed that Catholics believe, and that upon divine authority *out of the Church there is no Salvation*. It is not Catholics who pass this sentence—it is Christ himself. Matth. xviii. 17. What want of charity then is in this opinion, however ill-founded, I cannot conceive. The thing is susceptible of a very familiar illustration. A Patient is dangerously sick. His Physician is of opinion that there is only one particular remedy that can save his life, and accordingly urges him to take it. In this sentiment there may perhaps be vanity and presumption—but the advice is an act of benevolence. If the Catholic church, while she laid before seceders the danger of dying in heresy, refused them admission into her communion, it would be uncharitable to the last degree. But the Church exposes the hazard of their situation with no other purpose than to promote their good—and to facilitate the return of the stray sheep to the sheepfold. But were this reproach ever so just, our Protestant breth-

ren must share a great part of it. "Those who do not acknowledge Christ as their Redeemer, (say they) cannot be saved." Now Jews, Mahometans and Pagans do not acknowledge him in this character; consequently, three fourths of the human race are, according to their own account, in a state of reprobation. That the representatives of the Catholic Church have in many instances abused the power confided to them by persecuting dissenters from the Catholic Faith, is acknowledged and lamented. "Wherever there are men (says Seneca,) there are faults."—The Church, though divinely commissioned, is a human society—and human societies are necessarily imperfect, because man is imperfect. The Protestant sects, with no commission whatever, have almost all persecuted in their turn.

Another slander ascribes great corruption of manners to Catholics—and boldly asserts that they substitute devotion for morality—thinking that a few pater-nosters, and ave-marias mumbled over, are sufficient to atone for the most enormous offences—and that Catholic Priests are loose and unprincipled.

In answer to this charge, I may safely say, that if there be any thing in which the Catholic church is pre-eminent, it is in the rigid morality of her doctrine. What she preaches, she fails not to practise. Her clergy are in general, pious, chaste and sober, and her laity are as virtuous, it is presumed, as the members of other communions.

It is true that many of the Catholic clergy (and still more Laymen) do not live up to their profession. Some ecclesiastics are proud, ambitious, dissipated and covetous—caring (as Massillon expresses it) more for the *fleece* than the

*Rock.* This is matter for regret, but not for surprise. "Have I not (says Jesus) chosen twelve, and is not one of you a devil? If in the very infancy of the church, under the immediate inspection of our Lord himself, and among his own Apostles, there could lurk treason and murder, what wonder is it that in so considerable a body as the Catholic clergy, there should occur some examples of lamentable defection? But if there be here and there a Judas in the Catholic church, so there are Peters and Pauls—men exemplary in virtue—whose every action and thought are a commentary on that Gospel which they are sent to proclaim. Look at that innumerable band of martyrs, who have bled for the faith. Look at the numerous missionaries, who traversing sea and land, have penetrated to the deepest caverns of savage retreat, to proclaim the glad tidings of a crucified Saviour. Look at the numerous covenants all over christendom, which, however calumniated, exhibit the most sublime virtues, and where the severity of the evangelical law is practised in all its purity. There, thousands of holy men consecrate their days and nights to devotion. That, thousands of faithful virgins, with their lamps trimmed and burning, employ every hour in offering prayers of intercession for a wicked world.

Finally, the Clergy and Dignitaries of the Catholic Church have been traduced as foes to civil liberty—and as enemies to light and knowledge, particularly displayed in keeping the common people in ignorance—and in withholding from them the Bible of salvation.

These are certainly tremendous charges; and if true, would long ago have shipwrecked the pretensions of the Catholic Church. But they are false.

All the European republics which have appeared these last six hundred years, were reared and fostered in the bosom of the Catholic Church, and have perished by the hands of her enemies. Magna Charta, the bulwark of British liberties, was the enterprize of Catholics. Literary works without number have been written by authors of this communion in support of the rights and liberties of mankind. Among others, we may instance the illustrious Sir Thomas More, who wrote the *UTOPIA*, or the scheme of a perfect commonwealth; in which (says David Williams, a Deist) are more real principles, real truths and real facts, than in all the systems of government, the codes of laws and commentaries on laws in the whole world." This great man was so zealous a Catholic, that he was put to death by Henry the eight, because he would not renounce his allegiance to the Sovereign Pontiff—nor recognize the supremacy of the tyrant in the church.

Look at the missions of Paraguay.—The Catholic Church had projected the conversion of the savages of this extensive region to the christian faith. A few Jesuits undertook the gigantic and hazardous enterprize. With a crucifix in one hand, and a hatchet in the other, they sought a way through the wilds of South America.—They chewed the leaf of the forest for food—and slaked their thirst with the rain from heaven.—Their lodging was among the branches of trees—and their slumbers were hourly interrupted by the roaring of lions, tygers and panthers, and the hissing of serpents. Nothing however, could appal these brave and indefatigable men. The hostility of the savages made up the measure of their sufferings. But their zeal and patience triumphed.



ed over every obstacle, and conciliating the barbarians by degrees, they founded a colony—and such a colony as the world never yet saw.

The republic of Plato was no longer a dream, In Paraguay was realized a society the happiest, and a legislation the most perfect, that history had yet presented to human admiration. Let those who stigmatize the Catholic Church in general—and the Jesuits in particular, as enemies to civil liberty and the rights of man, read the relation of the missions of Paraguay and be silent.

It is equally false that the Catholic Clergy are enemies to light and knowledge. Those who love to contrast the learning of the ancient Pagans with that of modern Christians, will do well to remember, that not a single line of any Greek or Roman writer would have reached our times, and inspection, had it not been for the care and vigilance of the Catholic Clergy. During and after the ravages of the Goths, Vandals and northern barbarians in the south of Europe, who laid all waste, Literature found an asylum in the convents of the Catholic Church—and if she has since come forth with her treasures to delight and edify the world, let those who afforded her so signal a protection, have their meed of praise.

But this is but a small part of the claim of Chatholics. The revival of letters was the work of Leo tenth—not merely a Catholic, but a *papal* power: and Voltaire avows that the Catholic reign of Louis the fourteenth made a fourth æra in literature—and was more fertile in illustrious men than the other three—viz.—those of Pericles, Augustus, and Leo tenth, though so renowned, put together.

In every branch of sacred and profane learning, in every art and in every science—in Music,

Painting and Sculpture—in Poetry, Eloquence and Criticism—in Philosophy, Metaphysics and Ethics—in Mathematics, Astronomy and Natural History—in Anatomy, Chymistry and Physiology. Catholics have so greatly distinguished themselves, as to bear off the palm from every other society in the universe. Mr. Hume acknowledges that the Catholics are the most learned of all the christian sects—and Lord Hutchinson in a speech in parliament, says, that “Catholicity has been the belief of the most extensive and enlightened nations, and of the most illustrious characters, that ever did honor to the name of man.”

That a society so illustrious as the Roman Catholic Church, should have been thus calumniated, must appear strange to all conversant with history.

Her two religious orders of Jesuits and Benedictines alone have been a living encyclopedia—and the whole world has acknowledged the value of their literary labors.

Scarcely a department of excellence can be named, which does not find a Catholic at the head of it. In such a galaxy of light and splendor, to venture to particularize any single star, were a sort of presumption. Theology is adorned by the names of all the Fathers of the Church, from Tertullion down to St. Thomas Aquinas and Bossuet. In philosophy, Descartes has divided the applause of mankind with Newton. Mallebranche associates with Locke in anatomizing the human intellect. Tasso, Ariosto, Petrarch, Corneille and Racine have rivalled Homer and Virgil in song. Bourdaloue and Massillon are names for eloquence itself. In Music, Catholicity has produced Corelli and Geminiani. In Painting,

Raffaëlle, Rubens, Michael Angelo, Le Brun and Poussia.

A Catholic first traversed the Atlantic ocean and the Indian seas. A Catholic first scaled the heavens in an air balloon. In fine, most of the inventions either of use or of ornament, which have appeared in modern times, owe their existence to the knowledge and ingenuity of Catholics. Yet Catholics are denounced as enemies to human improvement !—*Risum teneatis amici ?*

As the Clergy of the Catholic Church have been illustrious for learning themselves, so have they been generally industrious in diffusing useful knowledge among the people.

Almost all the universities, colleges and schools in Europe that are not of recent institution, were founded by the zeal and charity of Catholics. These establishments are much more numerous in Catholic than in Protestant countries—and infinitely superior in their government and regulation. So excellent has been their discipline in all ages, that the immortal chancellor Bacon pays them this compliment. "When I consider the talents of their master, and their ability, both to promote the improvement and form the manner of their pupils, I am tempted to cry out, as Agesilaus to Pharnabazus—*Utinam noster esses cum talis sis !* When the education of youth is in question, the shortest would be to say, go and view those schools."

That the Catholic Church withholds the scriptures from the common people is equally false. This divine book has been translated into all the languages of the known world, where the Catholic faith is professed. It is true that in the distribution of copies, among many where a spirit of caval and contention was ready by oblique inter-

pretation to wrest the sense to their own destruction, the Clergy have shewn some reserve. Can we wonder at this, after what we have seen take place among our Protestant brethren, in whose communions a succession from the universal Church has multiplied opinions and divisions without end?

As the versions of the Holy Scriptures into all the modern languages have been innumerable, so they have always had the sanction of the sovereign Pontiff himself—whose interests would be exceedingly endangered by this measure, if he were the person that he is mistaken for: that is, *the man of sin*.

To the Archbishop of Florence, who had translated the bible into Italian, the late Pope Pius the sixth wrote a complimentary letter, unequalled for a spirit of liberality as well as of piety.

Such is the Catholic Church, uniting in herself every feature and gratification, which reason and religion teach us to expect in a Church of Christ. Antiquity, universality, scripturality, uniformity and invariability of doctrine—and lastly, the gift of miracles.

I now proceed to argue, that if the Roman Catholic be not the true Church of Christ, there is and can be *none*—and that consequently those who deny her authority must take refuge in Deism and reject all revealed religion.

Between these two extremes, range all the Protestant sects. But so discordant are their opinions, that an unconcerned spectator would hardly believe that they recognized any common authority. They have however, (it is insisted) a standard of truth and a rule of faith, by which they profess to be governed entirely. This is the bible.

"The Bible (says Chillingworth,) is the religion of Protestants."

For the Bible to be the religion of Protestants and their rule of faith, the Bible ought to be *true*. The proof, however upon Protestant principles is no easy task.

Revealed religion is founded upon miracles. Who saw these miracles performed? Many. Have any now living heard personally their report? No. But their testimony is recorded in the Old and New Testaments, which have been handed down to us through preceding generations. Through what channel? Through that of Luther, Calvin and Melanethon? No, certainly. Let the question be answered with triumph. They have been transmitted *through the channel of the Catholic Church*. And had this Church not existed, neither the doctrines nor the books would have ever reached us. The Catholic Church is the sole legitimate depository of the scriptures, and which alone can prove their authenticity and explain their meaning.

If our Protestant brethren should object that much of the Old Testament has been also transmitted through the channel of the synagogue; we might be permitted to reply, that as their best theologians condemn the Jewish interpretation of the prophecies and follow the Catholic, it is a tacit recognition of this claim of the Catholic Church as the regular canal of tradition.

With regard to the New Testament, should our Protestant brethren cite the Greek and eastern Churches and say, that it has been equally transmitted through their channel; we should rejoin, that the Greek Church is not yet a thousand years old—that both Greeks and Orientals have separated from Catholic unity, and have derived

their religion with the books which contain its doctrines from the Roman Catholic Church, as much as the Protestants.

These facts being admitted, what guarantee have our Protestant brethren, that the Catholic Church is now the sole inventor of christianity, and has not forged the books of the New Testament which establish it? Some will perhaps here reply and assent that even supposing the Catholic Church the sole canal through which the Scripture have been transmitted—are nevertheless pure and unadulterated: for the Church dared not corrupt them. Indeed! A Church typified as the mother of harlots, the seducer of nations—in fine a sink of superstition and impiety—governed by a chief, who has usurped the place of the Almighty. What! a Church like this, which has been supposed to corrupt every other institution for puposes of idolatry; she dared not corrupt the text of a book in manuscript, written by so many different hands; a book in which her doctrine and discipline are declared to be denounced and condemned in every page! Stood there then an Angle with a drawn sword to guard this gate of Paradise? Did a profanation of this ark of the covenant threaten a destruction to Catholics, like that of Noah and his host? No, indeed. As the Catholic Church had assuredly the power, so had she at the same time the strongest motives to corrupt, falsify and even *suppress* the Scriptures, if a thousandth part of what is alledged against her be true; and possessing all the literature of the world, during the period which is called the dark ages, she might have escaped with perfect impunity.

Admitting however, that the truths of Holy writ to be proved by satisfactory evidence, and

that the Catholic Church has not violated her sacred deposit, the Protestant must still hold his faith by the most precarious tenure.

The Scriptures then are acknowledged to be true. But of what number of books, and what precise books do they consist? The Scriptures themselves are silent upon the subject. Several books of the Old Testament, Protestant writers say are wanting—as the *book of Jasher*, and that of the *Wars of the Lord*. Many of the canon they reject as apocryphal, and print them apart from the rest. The followers of Swedenborg have lately rejected others.

Even supposing this difficulty vanquished, others arise, not less obstinate and perplexing.

“The Bible (says Chillingworth) is the religion of Protestants.” But what Bible—that is what edition, what copy? The learned Doctor Mill computed that in his time there were no less than *thirty thousand readings* of the New Testament. Can we for a moment doubt that in these various readings, there is matter enough to form as many sects, when we see a hundred sects divide upon the *same reading*; viz: that of the Bible printed in the reign of king James the first?

If it be said that the different Bibles used by our Protestant brethren, have agreed in all the essential articles of faith and practice, and have differed only in minor points, it libels the first reformers as lovers of disputes and quarrels on account of trifles; for quarrel they certainly did, and the burthen of mutual abuse was the various translations of the Bible.

Hear their own words—Zuinglius says to Luther “thou corruptest, O Luther the divine word. Thou art an open and bold perverter of the sacred Scriptures; although we have esteemed



thee beyond measure, yet we now blush at thy profaneness." Luther is not behind hand with him, but calls him and his followers, "asses, fools, anti-christs and impostors." The Bible of the divines of Basil, Beza calls "wicked and quite repugnant to the dictates of the Holy Ghost." The Bible of Castalio, the same Beza calls "sacrilegious, wicked and pagan." Of the Bible of Beza himself, Castalio in his turn says, that "indeed to mention all Beza's corruptions of the Scriptures, would fill a volume; and Molinæus says, "Beza changes entirely the text." The Bible of Calvin, the same Molinæus criticises with equal severity and says, "Calvin makes the text of the gospel leap up and down. He uses violence to the letter of the gospel, and adds to the text." Have our English versions merited or found any better quarter? They are condemned by great numbers of learned Protestants, and the divines of Lincoln in their address to king James the first, say "our translation is absurd and senseless, perverting the meaning of the Holy Ghost."

But has the Catholic himself a Bible exempt from these exceptions. Yes, surely. What Bible? The Vulgate; a Bible sanctioned by the universal Church since the earliest ages, and the *only one* read by one hundred million of Catholics. A version of which an ancient Protestant scholar speaks as follows: "The Vulgate is found in its most important various readings, to agree with the most approved manuscripts, and with the ancient versions of the best authority."

There is yet another inconsistency. If the Bible be the religion of Protestants, it might at least be expected that they would confine themselves rigorously to its prescriptions, and neither admit nor reject any article of faith or practice without

its sanction. But they baptise infants and that by affusion. Whence do they derive this custom? Not from the New Testament, most assuredly. And with respect to the mode of baptism, adults were led into the water and immersed.

Again. Our Protestant brethren forgetting the commandment which they are so careful to inscribe in letters of gold upon the walls of their churches, make no account of the *seventh day* of the week, so sacred among the ancient people of God, and observe the *first* in its stead. Does any part of Scripture authorize this change? I know of none. We read indeed in the New Testament of the disciples meeting on the first day of the week *with one accord*: but this very phrase shews it not to have been a divine institution, but a mere matter of common routine.

As our Protestant brethren have adopted some articles which are unscriptural, so have they rejected others which were strongly enjoined. The *Pediluvium* or *foot washing*, was one of the most important institutions of our Saviour, as appears from his remarkable words to St. Peter. St. John xiii. 14. 15.

The truth is, and it is a splendid triumph to Catholicity, that all these observances, the adoption of some and the rejection of others, are derived from the Catholic Church, and are a homage to her traditions.

Protestant writers have laid much stress upon the difference between the Bible, which they call (and that truly) the word of God and what they denominate *human tradition*. There is however no essential difference between them. *The whole is tradition, and the whole is the word of God*: and this tradition, whether scriptural or oral, is equally entitled to our respect and obedience.

When Christ established his Church, as the eternal depository of the religion which he brought down from heaven, not a line of the New Testament was yet written : nor during thirty three years of his residence on earth, did he write a line himself. All his instructions were by word of mouth. It pleased indeed the Holy Spirit, after these events, to inspire the chosen apostles to record them with the view to aid the infant interests of christianity, by publishing to the world the most remarkable traits in the history and character of this divine religion. But though these writings embraced the essentials, they were never intended to record all the minutæ of faith and practice, still less were they designed to be their own interpreters, or leave the awful truths which were the subject of them to *private interpretation*. The Bible is not of superior authority to the Church, it is only of *collateral* authority. The Church could better subsist without the Scriptures, than the Scriptures without the Church.

It is another difficulty that the Bible is written in various and obsolete languages, translated and re-translated over and over again : offering us at length an infinity of copies, obscure and interpolated. Who has the sagacity, the patience, the time and the opportunity to undertake the development of all these obscurities ; a mistake in one of which might be fatal ?

No—It is not thus that Almighty God has dealt with his poor creatures. It is not his will that men should risk their salvation upon the equivocation of a Hebrew point, or a Greck article. He knows, that as a law requires a Law-giver to make it, so it requires a judge to interpret it.

It would not be possible to govern a community, if laws were left to arbitrary interpretation and execution. The Catholic Church founded by our Saviour himself, is the grand tribunal, to which men are to refer in all their spiritual concerns. If she exacts the most implicit obedience, she repays it with peace and security. In her communion and under her protection, as far as doctrine is concerned, we are safe.

This principle of submission and subordination, so necessary to every society, though formally denied by our Protestant brethren is nevertheless virtually admitted. Synods have been assembled in the several counties of the reform, to digest and impose articles of faith. And though the foundation of Protestantism rests upon *the right of private judgment*: yet in most Protestant communions, this private judgment is as much controlled by the decisions of their Synods, as it is among Catholics by the decrees of the general councils. It is therefore an insult as well as a tyranny to direct every man like the Bereans to search for himself, and then denounce as rebellion and impiety, the slightest departure from the standard of doctrine, which their chiefs have erected. Of all inconsistencies, this is the most gross, flagrant and cruel.

Calvin, as an apostate from the Catholic Church, was a bad man, but as the persecutor of Servetus, he was a monster.

Many intelligent Protestants, struck with these arguments, have admitted the necessity of a *visible Church*, without however directly acknowledging the Roman Catholic to be this Church; though they could find the marks of it no where else. Among others, bishop Butler in his excellent work, "The Analogy of Religion, natural

and revealed," makes the following important remarks : " As christianity served these ends and purposes when it was first published, by the miraculous publication of itself ; so it was intended to serve the same purpose in future ages, by means of the settlement of a *visible Church* ; of a society distinguished from common ones, and from the rest of the world, by peculiar religious institutions, by an instituted method of instruction—and an instituted form of external religion. Miraculous powers were given to the first preachers of Christianity, in order to their introducing it into the world ; a visible church was established in order to continue it—and carry it on successively through all ages."

For a church to have this extensive and honorable commission, she must be *infallible* ; and it is upon this absolute necessity of the case, that the Catholic church asserts her infallibility.

Among the various abuses of terms, there is none more palpable than the word *Church* among our seceding brethren. They speak with great confidence of the *Protestant Church* in contradistinction to the Catholic. Now strictly speaking, there is no such society. A vast variety of sects have appeared during the last three hundred years in Europe and America, denominated Protestant, from their protesting against what they call the errors of the Church of Rome. But they have no other bond of union whatever. They are many of them bitter foes to each other—and profess tenets of reciprocal contradiction. Can there be a greater contrast in two forms of doctrine and worship, than is offered by those of the Church of England and the Shakers ?

In this chaos of creeds—amid this anarchy of sects and opinions, it is true with mathematical

certainty that all cannot have truth on their side. All may be wrong—but all cannot be right. Yet alas ! they all appeal to the same standard of faith—the Bible—though no two sects of many hundreds agree in their interpretation of its meaning.

Suppose a new convert to christianity—who had as yet joined no religious society, were all at once introduced into a country, full of the different Protestant communions, and were required to unite himself to one of these societies, with the Bible in his hand for a rule—no words could express the measure of his embarrassment in making his election.

Would he enter into communion with the church of England ? He would then see much of the ritual of a church, pronounced *the mother of harlots*. He would meet with Bishops and Archbishops—organs, surplices, balls, &c. of which he has no notice in the New-Testament. He would see episcopal ordination derived solely through the channel of a supposed idolatrous church. He would find the real presence of Christ avowed in the thirty-nine articles—and kneeling required in receiving the sacrament. He would find confirmation asserted and practised in contradiction, not merely as this church declares to her own articles, but to the Bible itself.

Would he join the Anabaptists ? He would learn that the true form of baptism taught by our Saviour—had been lost for fourteen or fifteen hundred years, and revived by them about three centuries ago. According to this scheme, none are christians but those who have been baptized by immersion, and none are proper subjects for baptism but adults. Consequently, all those who have been baptized according to other forms dur-

ing these fourteen or fifteen hundred years have been baptized in vain.

Would he try his fortune among the Quakers? He would learn that the scripture is a *dead letter*, and that "the spirit of God in the soul of man" is the sole agent of his salvation; that all rites and ceremonies ceased with Jewish economy—that all worship is spiritual, and that the whole duty of man consists in a diligent attention to the inspiration of the light of God within us.

Would he seek an assylum among the Methodists? He would learn that good works, upon which our divine Master laid so much stress, are but "filthy rags;" and that in the unregenerate they even have the nature of *sin*. He would find too that all their enthusiasm and aversion to other sects, have not been able to preserve their cohesion. They split a few years after their organization, into two divisions. The Calvinistic party ranged themselves under the standard of Whitefield—and the Arminian under that of Wesley.

In this manner might our hopeless wanderer rove from communion to communion, from sect to sect, and find no rest for the sole of his foot. He would see nothing but inconsistencies and incongruities on every side—and so far from a union in any thing like a distinct Protestant Church he would continually witness new secessions and subdivisions.

"When a man (says the great Bossuet) fixes himself either entirely upon faith, as Catholics do, or entirely upon human reason, as infidels do, it is easy for him to establish a connected and uniform model of doctrine. But when a man goes about to make a composition of one and the other, he always says something which he would



not say, and afterwards falls into opinions, the sole contrarieties of which shew the manifest falsity of them."

Thus it appears that out of the Catholic Church, there is no rational resource but Deism. Too often the alternative is worse than this—and many an example has there been of a Catholic, after rejecting the authority of his native church, becoming an Atheist.

The authors of the Encyclopedia speak very pertinently on this subject. "The first step (say they) which the curious and indocile Catholic takes, when he begins to be dissatisfied with his religion, is to adopt the Protestant rule of investigation—to constitute himself the judge of religion and become Protestant. Led on by this rule in the ardor of investigation, he soon begins to discover that the principles of Protestantism are incoherent and its doctrine unintelligible. Still therefore, conducted by the same rule, he goes forward and becomes a Socinian. Socinianism, he finds out, has all the perplexities and inconsistencies of Protestantism and he therefore declares himself a Deist. Well—still discontented, because still pursued with difficulties, he insensibly becomes a Pyrrhonian. Pyrrhonism is a state too dreadful to endure, and he concludes the series of his errors, by sinking into the dreadful abyss of Atheism."

The history of the reformation is a satire upon its name and pretensions. If sound doctrine gained nothing by this revolt, there are abundant vouchers to prove, that sound morality gained as little. Even in the earliest days of this unhappy secession, when prudence and policy ought at least to have saved appearances, what was the character of Protestantism and Protestants? Let us hearken to their own report.

Paulus Eberus, a learned Lutheran divine, utters this bitter complaint. "Our whole evangelical congregation abounds with so many divisions and scandals, that it is nothing less than what it pretends to be. If you look upon the evangelical teachers themselves, you will see that some of them are spurred on with vain glory and an invidious zeal. Some of them raise unreasonable debates, and then maintain them with unadvised heat. There are many of them who pull down by their wicked lives, what they had built up by the truth of their doctrine. Which evils, as every one sees with his own eyes, so has he great reason to doubt whether evangelical congregation be the true church in which so many and such enormous vices are discovered."

Andrew Eudith in his epistle to Beza, writes as follows—"What sort of people are our Protestants, struggling to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, sometimes to this side, sometimes to that? You may perhaps know what their sentiments in religion are to-day; but you can never certainly tell what they will be to-morrow. In what article of religion do these churches agree among themselves, which have cast off the Bishop of Rome? Examine all from top to bottom, you shall scarce find one thing affirmed by one, which is not immediately condemned by another for wicked doctrines."

Luther himself in many places, complains of the world's growing worse and worse. "And men, (says he,) are now more revengeful, covetous and licentious than they were in the Papacy." "Heretofore, (adds he in another place,) when we were seduced by the Pope, every body did willingly follow good works. And now no man either sayeth or knoweth any thing, but how to

get all to himself by exactions, pillage, theft, lying, usury, &c." The same Luther acknowledges "that under the Papacy are many good christian things ; yea, *all that is good in christianity.*" " I say moreover, (rejoins he) *that under the Papacy is true christianity, even the very kernel of christianity.*"

Melanthon says, " It is plain, that in these countries, men's whole concern almost is about banqueting, drunkenness and carousing. And so strangely barbarous is the people, that most men are persuaded, that if they do but fast one day, they must die the following night.

Calvin says, " Of so many thousands, who renouncing popery, seemed eagerly to embrace the gospel, how few have amended their lives ? Nay, what else did the greater part pretend to, but shaking off the yoke of superstition, to give themselves more liberty to follow all kind of lasciviousness ?"

Jacob Andreas says, " the other part of the Germans ; viz.—the Protestants, gives due place to the preaching of the work of God ; but no amendment of manners if found among them : on the contrary, we see them lead an abominable, voluptuous, beastly life ; instead of fasts, they spend whole nights and days in revellings and drunkenness."

Wolfgangers Musculus says, " our gospellers are grown so unlike themselves, that whereas under popery, they were religious in their errors and superstition ; now in the light of the known truth, they are more profane, light, vain, and temerarious than the very children of this world."

Sir Richard Baker confesses, " that now was the state of religion in England come to a strange pass, because always in passing and had no exist-

ence. That the fable of Proteus, who changed himself into all shapes and forms, might be no longer a fable, when the religion of England might be its true moral."

Finally, King Henry the eight, says in a speech delivered in the thirty seventh year of his reign—"what love or charity is there among you, when one calls another Heretic and Anabaptist—and he calls him again Papist, Hypocrite, Parisee? Of this I am sure, that charity and virtue were never less exercised, and that God among christians was never less revered, honored, or served."

The candid Protestant will see the pertinency of these extracts, and not suspect me of any wish to give pain. Far be it from me to confound our Protestant brethren of the present day, with those who were guilty of these excesses. Let it be however, acknowledged, that the want of an infallible authority in matters of faith was unhappily the cause of them. The radical evil still exists, and if it produce not such bitter fruits as in former times, our brethren of the reform owe it not to their doctrine, but to the general influence of civilization and refinement.

Having now finished the undertaking I had prescribed to myself, I here close the subject.—There are in the various Protestant communions, thousands of well disposed persons, who only require to have the substance of the controversy impartially laid before them, to receive the truth in all its simplicity. To these I address this humble attempt, and affectionately request them to weigh the arguments thus offered to their consideration. Let them not forget, that religion is the most important concern of mankind; and that while all the Protestant sects unite in acknowledging that Catholics may be saved; the Catholic

Church, the depository of all truth, declares that out of her pale there is no salvation. O that we may all know in this our day the things which belong to our peace, before they be forever hidden from our eyes!

## STEPHEN CLEVELAND BLYTH.

## ERRATA.

Page	3	Line	23	read <i>persuasion</i> for <i>persuasion</i> .
—	—	—	27	dele <i>was</i> .
—	10	—	33	put a period instead of a comma after <i>Mahometanism</i> .
—	17	—	—	after the first paragraph, the subject should have been divided.
—	21	—	11	add <i>be</i> after <i>to</i> .
—	22	—	37	read <i>attested</i> for <i>attended</i> .
—	23	—	17	read <i>the</i> for <i>this</i> .
—	24	—	31	dele <i>and</i> before <i>appear</i> .
—	25	—	4	read <i>us</i> for <i>as</i> .
—	—	—	7	add <i>more</i> after <i>no</i> .
—	27	—	19	read <i>Naziansen</i> for <i>Narianszen</i> .
—	—	—	21	read <i>Theodore</i> for <i>Theodoat</i> .
—	29	—	35	add <i>from</i> after <i>penitents</i> .
—	30	—	18	read <i>and</i> instead of <i>of</i> .
—	32	—	31	read <i>persecutions</i> for <i>prosecutions</i> .
—	35	—	3	add inverted commas after <i>devil</i> .
—	—	—	19	read <i>convents</i> for <i>covenants</i> .
—	36	—	9	read <i>liberties</i> for <i>ilberties</i> .
—	—	—	18	read <i>eighth</i> for <i>eight</i> .
—	38	—	29	read <i>Tertullian</i> for <i>Turtullion</i> .
—	39	—	2	read <i>Poussin</i> for <i>Poussia</i> .
—	—	—	37	read <i>cavil</i> for <i>caval</i> .
—	40	—	20	read <i>qualification</i> for <i>gratification</i> .
—	41	—	14	read <i>Melanchthon</i> for <i>Melanthon</i> .
—	42	—	9	read <i>assert</i> for <i>assent</i> .
—	—	—	27	read <i>Korah</i> for <i>Noah</i> .
—	43	—	33	read <i>translations</i> for <i>tanelations</i> .
—	44	—	28	read <i>eminent</i> for <i>ancient</i> .
—	47	—	14	read <i>countries</i> for <i>counties</i> .
—	49	—	18	read <i>bells</i> for <i>balls</i> .
—	—	—	17	read <i>Protestant</i> for <i>Potestant</i> .
—	52	—	14	read <i>our</i> after <i>whether</i> .
—	—	—	17	read <i>Dudith</i> for <i>Eudith</i> .
—	53	—	8	read <i>Melanchthon</i> for <i>Melanthon</i> .
—	—	—	24	read <i>is</i> for <i>if</i> .
—	—	—	29	read <i>Wolfgangus</i> for <i>Wolfangers</i> .
—	54	—	9	read <i>Pharisee</i> for <i>Parisee</i> .